

Raising Student Achievement:

A Standards of Learning Update

Virginia Board of Education
January 2004

Raising Student Achievement

A Standards of Learning Update from the Virginia Department of Education January 2004

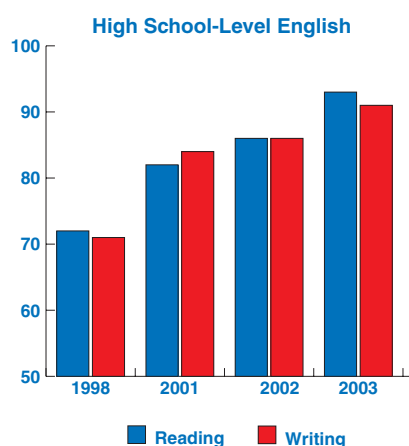
Measuring Success

Virginia is raising student achievement by setting clear academic standards and measuring progress in meeting those standards through regular testing.

Students take Standards of Learning (SOL) tests in grades 3, 5, 8, and in high school. Since the first year of SOL testing in 1998, student achievement has increased in all subject areas, including double-digit increases on 23 of the 26 assessments administered during all five years.

The most striking increases in achievement in 2003 were on the two English tests students must pass to earn a high school diploma.

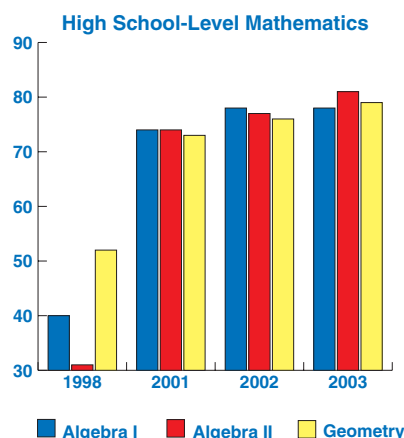
- In English/reading, 93 percent of students passed in 2003, a gain of seven points over 2002 and 21 points since 1998.



- In English/writing, 91 percent of students passed in 2002, up 5 percentage points from 2002 and 20 points from 1998.

Achievement in high school-level mathematics also has increased significantly.

- In Algebra I, the percentage of students passing was 78 percent in the spring of 2003, a 38-point increase since 1998, the first year of SOL testing.



- The statewide pass rate for Algebra II in 2003 was 81 percent, a gain of four points over the 2002 rate and a 50-point improvement since 1998.
- The 2003 geometry pass rate was 79 percent, a gain of three points over the 2002 pass rate and 27 points since 1998.

These pass rates do not include high school students who passed tests after participating in remedial programs. The Board of Education has set no limit on the number of times a high school student may retake an SOL test needed for graduation.

Improving Schools

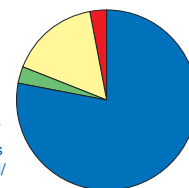
Virginia's students are achieving more because the quality of instruction in Virginia's public schools is improving.

Increasing student achievement is reflected in school accreditation ratings. More than three-fourths of the state's schools already have met or exceeded the standard for full accreditation; hundreds of others have shown dramatic improvement. For example:

- 1,422 (or 78 percent) of Virginia's schools are now Fully Accredited.
- 62 (or 3 percent) of Virginia's schools are rated Provisionally Accredited/Meets State Standards, meaning that student achievement at these schools either met or exceeded 2003 progress benchmarks set by the Board of Education.
- Since 2000, the number of schools Accredited with Warning has declined from 234 to 51.

**Accreditation Status
2003-04**

- Fully Accredited
- Provisionally Accredited/Meets States Standards
- Provisionally Accredited/Needs Improvement
- Accredited with Warning



"Because Virginia has stayed the course on accountability, schools across the commonwealth have had an opportunity to show that all children can learn and achieve."

Thomas M. Jackson, Jr., President, Board of Education

Verified Achievement

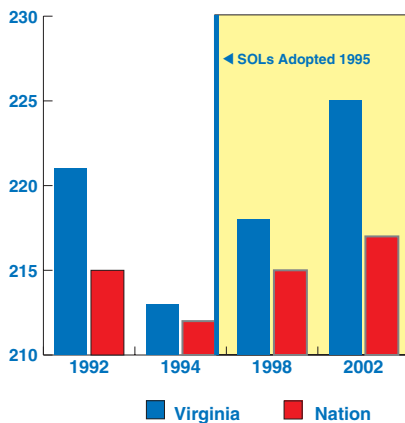
The increase in student achievement is confirmed by the performance of Virginia students on a variety of nationally recognized tests.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

■ Since the adoption of the SOL in 1995, the average score of Virginia fourth graders on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading test has risen 10 points and is now seven points higher than the national average.

■ Virginia students in grades 4 and 8 outperformed students nationwide on the 2002 NAEP writing tests. The commonwealth's fourth graders achieved an average score of 157, four points higher than the national average of 153. Virginia eighth graders also achieved an average score of 157, compared with the national average of 152.

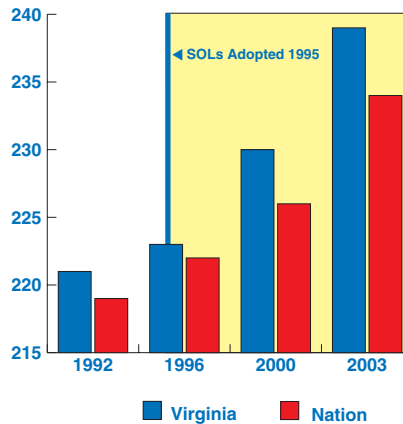
NAEP Average Scale Scores:
Reading Grade 4



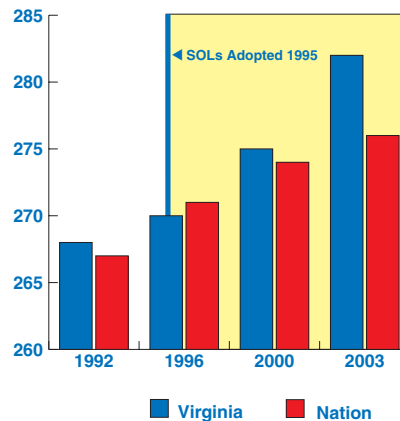
■ The average scores of Virginia fourth- and eighth-graders on the 2003 NAEP mathematics tests rose by nine and seven points, respectively, compared with achievement in 2000. The percentage of Virginia grade 4 students performing at or above the proficient level increased by

12 points to 36 percent. The percentage of eighth graders performing at or above the proficient level rose by six points to 31 percent.

NAEP Average Scale Scores:
Mathematics Grade 4



NAEP Average Scale Scores:
Mathematics Grade 8



■ The average mathematics score of African-American students in grade 4 in Virginia on the 2003 NAEP rose by 12 points. The average score of black students in grade 8 increased by nine points.

SAT I and Advanced Placement

■ Since 1998, the average score of Virginia seniors on the verbal portion of the SAT-I has increased by seven points while the achievement of Virginia students on the mathematics portion of the test is up by 11 points. Virginia ranks first in the South and tenth in the nation in the

percentage of high school seniors taking the SAT I, which measures the aptitude of students for college-level work.

■ During the 2002-03 school year, 31,966 Virginia students took Advanced Placement (AP) courses. This represented a 4.5-percent increase in AP participation over the previous year.

Recognized Success

In November 2002, Governor Mark R. Warner accepted a Distinguished Performance Award from the National Alliance of Business (NAB) for Virginia's leadership in advancing the quality of education and training. The NAB noted Virginia's "unwavering support of strong academic achievement through its Standards of Learning program."

In its *2001 Results Card*, Standards-Work, a nonprofit, bipartisan education consultancy, said this about the progress the commonwealth has made in raising student achievement under the SOL initiative:

Virginia's public school children continue to improve significantly in virtually all areas of the state's assessments, especially in math and writing — results confirmed by the national assessments.

In its *Testing the Testers 2003* report, the Princeton Review gave Virginia's accountability program straight As for alignment with academic standards and test quality.

The SOL initiative has received the support of policymakers and legislators of both political parties over the course of three administrations. Because of this sustained support, accountability and achievement are now the organizing principles of Virginia's public schools. Virginia is leading the nation in the implementation of standards-based school reform.